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THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

VOL. VIII, NO. 4 UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND—COLLEGE PARK, MD. APRIL, 1946

THE COLLEGE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOLS

Professor Hodges' statement is the third of a series which is attempting to formulate CEA's policy in strengthening the position of English in the college curriculum. These statements are presented for discussion by the members.

From all quarters we hear about the lack of fundamental English training which so obviously handicaps many college freshmen. Even those colleges and universities that admit students from only a small upper fraction of high school graduates are reporting some need for remedial work. Is it any wonder, then, that colleges and universities admitting the general run of high school graduates are facing a major problem in their teaching of English? Perhaps we should pause long enough to inquire into the responsibility for this unhappy situation. Is the college teacher himself partly responsible for the inadequately trained freshmen now entering college?

The college English staff deals with the student at the end of his formal training, when the deficiencies of the whole English program are most evident. And besides, the college staff usually has a more thorough grounding in English than the teachers in the schools. Therefore college teachers should be able to contribute much to the mapping out of the full English course.

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APOLOGY FOR MY PROFESSION

English composition, as Professor T. M. Pearce maintained in the January issue of **The News Letter**, is a paramount concern of general education, not, as the Harvard Committee reports, a college activity incidental to the study of other subjects and one that should be supervised solely by the teachers of these other subjects, in the conference hour. I wish to say that I am essentially in agreement with Professor Pearce on this matter. I think he is right in saying that the college course in English composition is the first course in

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THE FAULT, DEAR ADMINISTRATORS

In **The CEA and Better Teachers** (February, 1946), Professor Creek states well enough the chief problems confronting those of us concerned with the teaching of college English and suggests proposals involving salary, status, class load, as well as inducements and directions to prospective aspirants. Approving as I do the stand we take in the Letter, I should await with my usual patience the next in the announced sequence, were it not for the alleged "objection from college and university administrators . . . that English is taught to the entire student population, including technical and professional students, and yet the college teacher of English is prepared to teach only the specialist in English or the humanities"; and for the frantic recourse on the part of SPEE in this sad extremity, to "try some methods of its own to train teachers of English in engineering colleges" (p. 5). For decades now I have read or listened to these allegations in silence — except among my colleagues. I can no longer resist the challenge to add my voice publicly to the chorus which must soon, we hope, confound the guilty.

I'm sick unto death of hearing the lamentations of those who would have this a world of, by, and for the specialist. Is it not apparent that one of the reasons most of our freshmen come to us

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MIDDLE ATLANTIC SECTION MEETING

College English Teachers of Delaware, District of Columbia, and Maryland are invited to a meeting of the Middle Atlantic Section, C. E.A., at Johns Hopkins U., Sat., May 4, 1946. The meeting will be called to order at 10:45 A. M. in Levering Hall, and adjourn for lunch in the same building. The luncheon cost will be moderate.

The Program

John D. Makosky, Western Maryland College: **Training the High School English Teacher.** Robert T. Fitzhugh, University of Maryland: **The College English Curriculum.** David Daiches: **The Place of the**

COURSES IN BIOGRAPHY —FOR THE DEFENSE

Some defense of a course in Biography in an English Department seems to me justified. Biography is quite as definite an art form as the novel or the essay. It is extremely ancient, for there are actually Egyptian specimens in tomb inscriptions. And one great biographer, Plutarch, in a way, consciously understood that it was a special art form, more than 1600 years ago. From one point of view, surely a course in biography is as justified as a course in epics.

Certain objections pointed out by your correspondent, I by no means deny to be objections. In any study of biography, there must be emphasis on scientific method. But if I have any absolutely unchangeable belief, it is that, if the primary consideration in all literary studies is not quite the same as in scientific studies, what must be called a scientific attitude must enter into some of our studies. It happens to enter into a course in biography in a rather high degree.

I think I'd put it this way. A required course in biography is not advisable. It is probably actually unwise to offer such a course, at all, unless one has a qualified person to teach it. And I fear the qualification is that the teacher should have himself written at least one biography. If a school has such a person, a course in biography is an excellent cultural elective for upper juniors and seniors. It can be made a kind of synoptic course, a tying together of what students (not

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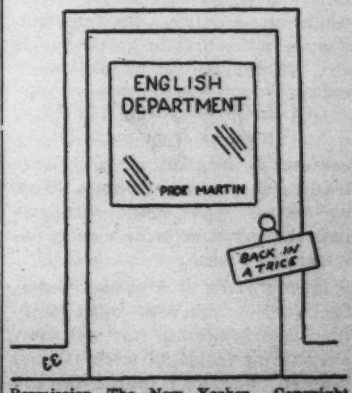

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THE SURVEY VERSUS THE GREAT BOOK COURSE

The current seems to be bearing us rapidly toward a curriculum in which a course in great books takes the place of a survey course in literature. The Harvard Committee proposes such a course, the aim of which "would be the fullest understanding of the work read rather than of men or periods presented, craftsmanship evinced, historic or literary development shown, or anything else." The committee fears that certain "attendant studies, philology, history of language, history of literature, biography of authors, discussion of literary form, criticism, prosody, and grammar" have taken the chief place in the study of literature. (**General Education in a Free Society**, p. 205.) The report of a committee of the College English Association also endorses this view. The members of the committee advise the abandonment of the survey course because of its "fragmentariness and superficiality" and its "undue emphasis on literary history." ("College English Curriculum," **The News Letter**, March, 1946, p. 5)

Now, undoubtedly, emphasis on the work itself is desirable, indeed absolutely necessary. Nothing should take the place, in undergraduate classes, of careful and reverent treatment of the text before one, no matter whether the course be survey or great books. This is what I understand by "philology." It is conceivable that some teacher may spend so much time on the biography of Keats that he never gets to the odes; that another may spend so much time on the Elizabethan theater that he never gets to Shakespeare's plays. It is also conceivable that a teacher of the dialogs of Plato may spend so much time on pre-Platonic philosophy, biography of Socrates, political situation in Athens, and influence of Plato on Christian thought that he will have little time for the dialogs themselves; that a teacher of Dante may spend so much time on the geography and hagiography of Hell, the state of learning and politics in Florence, Thomist phi-

(Continued on page 5)

THE NEWS LETTER

Editor
ROBERT T. FITZHUGH

Editor Emeritus
BURGES JOHNSON

Associate Editor
J. GORDON EAKER, Kansas State Teachers College, Pittsburg, Kans.

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EDITORIAL

English departments are large, the budgets for English departments are large, and the loads of English teachers are heavy in undergraduate courses. But the pay of those teachers is not attractive, particularly in comparison with that of their colleagues in some other departments. Nor is the prospect bright of their enjoying a larger proportion of the general fund, particularly when administrators already question the effectiveness of English instruction. The position of English instructors seems to be just their hard luck.

The president allots just so much money; it must hire enough teachers to meet all the students who register; loads and salaries must be adjusted. The familiar result is not happy, although classes are met and work is done. The wonder is that so much is done so well. Better instruction will require better teachers who are better trained and better rewarded. It will be more expensive, much more.

Is there any chance of such a development? Certainly not, unless the English program enjoys strong support from students, from other departments, from the administration. The way to larger salaries, improved conditions, more effective instruction, and better support is a program of generally recognized merit for the majority of students. Even with an excellent program, however, it will still be well to know the points and the way to apply pressure.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute to "I've Been Reading." Comments on any book that they feel will interest other English teachers will be welcome. Members who wish to review new books should address the Assistant Editor.

THE FIRST FREEDOM, by Morris L. Ernst (316 pages, with bibliography, exhibits, and index; The Macmillan Company, New York).

Teachers of English are vitally concerned with any threat to freedom of speech. In the days of Milton's "Areopagitica" the threat was censorship, but in our day the threat comes from the growing trend toward monopoly in the three main avenues of communications: the press, the radio, and the movies.

Morris L. Ernst believes that the trend toward fewer and fewer newspaper ownerships, which has left only 117 cities in the United States with more than one newspaper, limits the full debate of public issues necessary in a democracy. He believes that a sliding scale of postal rates should be instituted to help small papers get a start. The field of book publishing is the freest, for it is not hard to start a new firm to publish books, and there is still competition among publishers for authors.

In the section on radio, the author is alarmed by the extent to which a few networks control most of the time of independent stations. Also, he says that much good material is barred from the air as controversial. In the movies the trend toward monopoly comes through a few producers' buying up chains of theaters and forcing them to book good and bad pictures by the block.

Teachers of English should be informed of this trend, for in totalitarian countries the universities were the first to go down. Is

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COURSES IN BIOGRAPHY

(Continued from page 1)

necessarily English majors) have learned in previous courses given by several departments—but perhaps have not seen as closely interrelated ideas.

If it is given as a liaison course, the subject presents opportunity for undergraduates to feel they are sharing in actual work of their teacher; who may emphasize one or more of several aspects—the fundamental qualities of humanity; the artistic problem of presenting what is really significant; the desirability of the chronological method, or of presentation of ideas categorically.

The arguments for an English department doing the job, rather than a department of history, are not overwhelming. But Boswell is to biography almost what Shakespeare is to drama. And, if a biographer happens to be a teacher, he is often found in an English Department.

My remark that the course is a nuisance if no biographer is present to give it, is based on actual knowledge. Many years ago a course in biography was put in at Hunter College, at the request of my lamented colleague, the late Professor Dibble. He was devoted to the art of writing biographies; though he did not live to complete many of them. He gave the course from the point of view of an earnest worker in a field, showing young students how he worked. He died very suddenly, and a substitute was called in to take his place. This person handled his other courses competently, but reported the biography course presented extreme difficulty to the teacher. My late "chief," Dr. Blanche Colton Williams, who was an extremely practical woman of letters, asked me to take over the course. She was quite frank about it; she thought anyone who had done a biography would find it interesting, that a person who had not done one would find it a horrible chore. I have taught the course for many years, and submit the report that my old friend sized the situation up. For the benefit of my colleagues, and on the basis of a lot of experience, I add a bit of practical advice. Nowadays I ask that the section not exceed 25, but that no special prerequisite be demanded; that if any favor need be shown, persons who are not English majors be preferred, but otherwise admit the first 25 that apply.

In the hands of any teacher with broad interests and a little experience with the art form of biography, I frankly consider the course a wonderful opportunity to introduce young people to the great minds of the past. But I frankly say that the qualifications for teaching the course, are not identical with those of even an absolutely first rate teacher of English.

Thomas Ollive Mabbott,
Hunter College.

CURRENT OPINION

Another scientist hastening to fulfil his newly realized obligation to share his findings with other citizens is the biologist, Caryl P. Haskins. In the February **Atlantic** he reported that conclusions drawn from study of animal cooperation might well indicate essential procedures for the new and larger unit now being undertaken by man. In the March issue, inquiring, "Is Man Cohesive?" he particularizes, interestingly. Two types of organization, he says, are found in nature: the familial and the associative. In the first, the members are related by birth; this is typified by the ant colony, which, like the human group, has its domestic "animals," its slaves, and its wars. Its government is autocratic; it subordinates the individual to the group and tends to limit his capacities, to force him to become a mere specialist. In the associative group, on the other hand, independent organisms voluntarily come together, and may periodically separate again; it is exemplified by a flock of birds migrating. It is democratic, developing and utilizing individual capacities to the full.

Man forms both groupings, but his basic biologic make-up is for the loose-knit structure, with its greater flexibility. Its extension to the world unit will constitute the most significant step ever taken in his social development, for he must finely balance these two very unlike types of organizations, constantly redetermining their point of equilibrium.

To make the world intellectually comprehensible, reiterates Elbridge Sibley, scientists and humanists will have to pool their forces. To provide illuminating aesthetic and ethical values, he says in "The Liberal College in a Secular World" **(J.H.Ed.,** Feb.), the liberal-arts curriculum, no longer dealing in "granules of knowledge which are no more coherent than dry sand," must effect a synthesis. This cannot be obtained merely through broadly planned curricula, with survey courses and with comprehensive examinations at the end of the four years. It will come only through interchange of ideas among the scientists and the humanists themselves. Public forums, in which they will openly argue with each other as to their respective fields, in the practical relevance of these to life, may perhaps generate heat, but will assuredly also produce more light.

Together, they will be less likely to lose sight of ultimate goals, and will better relate their specialties to human culture as a whole.

Such **rapprochment** would delight Joseph A. Brandt, who writes "I Can't Quite Hear You, Doctor" (**Harper's**, March). Bemoaning the incomprehensibility of most scholarly articles, he laments the enforced specialization that results in complete lack of social awareness. Too often has professional advancement been contingent upon articles written in jargon—until the days of the atomic bomb, which is now undermining the ivory tower. As an example of how well a scientist can write when he is speaking to the many, he mentions Paul Sears' **Deserts on the March.**

Through the clear mind of Lise Meitner, atomic-bomb scientist, **Fortune** for March provides a relatively simple explanation of the whole constitution of matter, as it is understood by scientists today. Excellent illustrations make plain the difference between simple elements like hydrogen and the more complex atoms in the periodic table. They show how bombardment of the latter by the alpha particles may accomplish the transmutation so earnestly sought by the Medieval alchemists. Indeed the known "building blocks of matter" are so well defined and differentiated that the reader begins to feel quite at home with hitherto elusive concepts of protons, neutrons, isotopes, and imaginatively follows through the process of atomic fissure—after at least one reperusal of this fascinating lecture.

OTHER ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Davenport, Russell W., "France: Beachhead of Liberty," **Fortune,** Oct., 1945.

Walker, C. Lester, "The China Legend," **Harper's,** March.

Schuman, Frederick L., "Designs for Democracy," **Cur. Hist.,** Dec., 1945.

Thompson, C. Mildred, "The Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization of the United Nations—with Text of Constitution," **For. Policy Reports,** Feb. 15.

AMERICA

Buckler, Helen, "The CORE Way," **Surv. Graphic,** Feb.

Barnes, Leo, "How Dangerous Is the Public Debt?" **Atlantic,** Feb.

Keyserling, Leon H., "Homes for All—and How," **Surv. Graph.,** Feb.

A. V. Hall,
University of Washington.

I'VE BEEN READING

(Continued from page 2)

it true that newspapers are more and more taking the safe side and avoiding controversy in order to make more profits? The crusading editor seems to be going out. His place is being taken by the columnist who reaches millions of people and standardizes thought more and more.

Anyone who knows John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty" knows how important minority representation is to our democracy. Mr. Ernst addressed his book to the Congress of the United States, and among several positive recommendations advocates the appointment of a joint Senate-House committee to inquire into the situation and to try to turn back the tide.

J. G. E.

LANGUAGE AND MYTH, by Enst Cassirer (Harper and Brothers, New York; 103 pages).

Every college instructor has been asked: "Why study foreign languages?" This little book gives the answer. The author draws his illustrations from languages spoken in all parts of the world. From them he reconstitutes the pattern of human culture, the evolution of the myths of mankind, and the steps by which man has gained a working philosophy of life.

It will do the English student a real service to study a book which demands thought. Did myths create words, or is language the mother of myths? What romance is found in the Polynesian poem, which tells of the wedding of Atea (Light) with the Red Dawn (Atanua)!

For many of us, boredom is the result of reading the hackneyed material in many of our textbooks. There is real pleasure in coming across a great thought couched in unfamiliar language. Thus does Herder describe the origin of myth and language among primitive men: "The driving storm, the gentle zephyr, the clear fountain and the mighty ocean — their whole mythology lies in those treasure troves, in the words and names of the ancient languages; and the earliest dictionary was thus a sounding pantheon."

The college student may grumble at foreign language requirements. Let him read this little volume, and he will find that language furnishes the key to the history of civilization.

H. S. Ficke,
University of Dubuque.

DICTIONARY OF WORD ORIGINS, by Joseph T. Shipley (The Philosophical Library, New York, 1945; 430 pages).

Dr. Shipley has attained a happy combination of scholarship and readability in his **Dictionary of Word Origins.**

One learns that **academy** comes from the name of the farmer who helped Castor and Pollux, that Dr. Samuel Johnson's incorrect derivation of **ake** from Gr. **axos** caused a permanent misspelling of **ache,** that "mad as a hatter" is not a slur upon the makers of our headgear, but really a reference to a snake. **Anatomy, atom, epitome,** and **tome** are close relatives. The discussion of **cloth** takes more than a page. The student of chemistry who turns to **element** will find the ninety-two elements each with its symbol and atomic number together with something about its history, running to something over five pages.

The **Dictionary of Word Origins** does not attempt to include slang. It does, however, have many modern terms: Heaviside layers, helicopter, nisei, issei, and sensei, Wac, Snafu, Flak, Nabisco, Socony.

Dr. Shipley's work will be a useful reference book, and it will open up a new field of study and enjoyment to many students who have not yet learned the fascination of words.

Walter Pennington,
Kansas State Teachers College,
Pittsburg

THE REPORT DRAWS FIRE

To the Editor:

I want to protest in the strongest terms against the inclusion of **two** courses in "Classics of American Literature" in the curriculum report just published, and the omission of a parallel course on "Classics of English Literature."

Why this prejudice against English Literature in the one department of the college where one would expect rather a prejudice for English Literature? I note that American literature comes in a third time under the disguise of Contemporary Literature. What is the big idea? Is the entire Association to suffer from the fact that the chairman of the committee happens to be a specialist in American Literature? Is the chairman of the committee merely trying to boost the sales of that abortion **American Poetry and Prose?** If so, does he not realize that his own textbook is ill adapted to a course restricted to the Classics of our national literature? And how did he ever get the report signed by those admirable scholars and teachers, E. K. Brown and Odell Shepard? And were the "officers and directors" merely asleep when they approved the report? Let me remind all these worthy gentlemen that eternal vigiance is the price of liberty. Is the College English Association to go nationalist and fascist?

Indignant Communist.

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THE FAULT

(Continued from page 1)

only semi-literate is that they have adhered throughout high school to a specialist's curriculum, ignoring or slighting what would not "help" them further that blinkered end? Is it not equally apparent that doctors, lawyers, engineers — since they attend not vocational schools but institutions of higher learning —are there being educated to function as intelligent citizens of a democracy, as well as in their professional capacities? Certainly, the more training in the humanities an instructor in composition has, provided he is also competent to teach it, the better qualified he is for aiding in laying this important groundwork. If administrators and the SPEE attribute the failure on the part of colleges and universities to turn out reasonably literate graduates to the humanist background of English instructors, they are wilfully deluding themselves or barking up the wrong tree. They, and we, might find some fruitful clues by taking a good square look at the curriculum for specialists, in its relation to English composition.

What happens during the first year of required English composition? All freshmen are signed up for 101. Most of these speak and write poorly. They need to acquire, among other things, a respect for their mother tongue and the habit of acceptable expression in it. This type of inadequately prepared student can be immeasurably helped by being asked to submit fairly short weekly papers, papers which are gone over painstakingly and returned promptly. Consider the usual number of students in one of these classes; multiply that number by three, or more. Is it any wonder that even those whose hearts are in their teaching falter? In 102, for the second term, no matter what else in the way of reading matter is included, these same students should continue to be disciplined in written expression, should be required to hand in a paper every other week, at least. Again, consider the punishment this means for their instructors. By such concentrated persistence, however, most of the ill-prepared freshmen do acquire a fair degree of ease and literacy in writing by the end of the first year.

But this facility is too newly acquired to have become habitual; it needs continued nurture and occasional application. In what other courses will our now-launched specialist be called upon to write? Well, he is required to study other subjects in the humanities division: economics, history, psychology, sociology. So far as I know, most instructors in these courses do not require papers, probably because their classes are too large. In their tests and final examinations, they usually subject their students to a series of true-false questions, which can be graded by machine or by assistants; or to a form of questionnaire which elicits fragmentary answers. In addition, our specialist may choose as one of his few electives a course in English literature. If he does, he may be called upon to hand in one paper toward the end of the term, but probably not. The rest is facts and figures.

Small wonder, then, that whatever competence in writing the originally handicapped freshman acquires in his year of required English composition dwindles as he nears the completion of his work in college. To acquire and maintain literacy in speech and writing, this particular student needs to be held accountable for both and to be given practice in both, to some extent, throughout his four years of training. Before college administrators point accusing fingers at instructors in composition, they might be asked to consider how they might modify the curriculum and procedures so as to ensure these instructors some hope of rewarding results in what has been and is an unequal battle, to put it mildly.

Mollie Cohen,
Illinois Institute of Technology.

APOLOGY

(Continued from page 1)

the humanities where the study of mankind is truly man; and it may be proper also, as he says, to think of composition as a content course as well as a means of training students in the skills of language. Surely the real teaching of English composition makes the subject one with literature, reading and writing being two different aspects of the same human activity, and composition being to the writer what literature is to the reader.

I have wondered how good the Harvard Committee's recommendation seems to the inheritors of the composition teaching tradition at Harvard. But apart from wonder, I fail to see how the recommendation of the Committee to take the teaching of English composition out of the hands of trained craftsmen and turn it over to explorers in the fields of learning could be expected to heighten the literacy of college graduates in the long run, or how it would remedy the illiteracy which is the immediate affliction of our educated people. My own recommendation would be the old one that English composition be taught by mature and genuinely educated persons who have demonstrated their ability to write (just as painting is taught by painters, music by musicians and composers of music, mathematics by mathematicians) and that it be taught concurrently in both the classroom and the conference room by the teachers of all other subjects, according to their abilities in the craftsmanship of writing.

It may be that English is important only as a tool subject. If so, it is a special kind of tool: a cutting tool that is useful in the making of other tools, communication tools for the learning and teaching of all subjects, and thus indirectly useful in shaping the materials of all subjects into intelligible units. It would not be useful to the same degree, of course, in the shaping of mathematics and physics and chemistry materials as in the shaping of, say, social science materials, because these first-named must be shaped primarily in the forms of their own specialized languages. But whatever the subject, the teacher's concern is not merely with what a student knows, but with how he knows it. And the goodness of giving language form to the stuff of consciousness is axiomatic in education. Not idly was it written by the scholarly Saint John that in the beginning was the Word.

To conclude, let me suggest a few useful things that college freshmen can certainly learn in an elementary writing course, English composition being nothing unless it is writing. They can learn to copy accurately a piece of some one else's skilful writing and make a respectable manuscript in the copying. They can learn to describe this copied piece, and so take the first step in criticism. They can learn that a sentence is a unit of utterance, usually with a subject and a predicate. They can learn to do with a dictionary several things beyond noting how words are spelled. They can learn how grammar serves the ends of composition. They can discover that English is a language, and that written composition is an art. Especially can they learn that English is a language, and that it must be studied as such, whether the subject matter of the course they are registered for is described as English composition or as English literature.

NEWS LETTERS to the following members have been returned as improperly addressed: Virginia T. Everett, Tusculum College, Greenville, Tenn.; Sherlock B. Gass, 2121 Euclid St., Lincoln, Neb.; Albert E. Hill, Univ. of Nevada; Delsie M. Holmquist, Moorhead, Minn.; Frederick P. Mayer, 1212 Heberton Ave., Pittsburgh 6, Pa.; Hoyt C. Reed, 642 Tilden Ave., Teaneck, N. J.; Dwight C. Eckerman, 70 Howe St., New Haven, Conn.; Isabel McKinney, 1018 9th St., Charleston, Ill.; Robert J. Conklin, Springfield College, Springfield College, Springfield, Mass.

BOOK NOTE

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THE COLLEGE TEACHER

(Continued from page 1)

But how much responsibility has the college English staff assumed? How much serious, constructive thought has it given to the building of an effective English program—from the grades through the graduate school? Has it given as much time to constructive planning as to denouncing the schools and professional educators for the deficiencies of English training in the schools? I contend that the teaching of English in the schools is not the responsibility of the educationists only. It is very definitely a problem for the college English staff. If we do not face it intelligently, we may eventually find ourselves teaching grade school English—even though the course may be labeled "Freshman English."

The problem is not one for beginners: it deserves the careful attention of the ablest men in the department. If we can give to the study the same kind of mature judgment (and downright hard work and investigation) needed to produce a good book, we may accomplish something. For one thing, the College English teacher must get beyond the college campus to find out what the English program is in the school. The suggestion will not be popular: too many college teachers are prone to leave the schools severely alone.

In Tennessee a modest program to improve English teaching is now in its fourth year.* The program depends upon organizations already functioning — upon the schools, the colleges, and the State Department of Education. And it calls for sustained co-operation.

First of all, the program attempts to give some indication yearly of the success of English teaching in the schools. Each fall the colleges (thirty-one in 1945) rank the entering freshmen according to their knowledge of English. Then these rankings are pooled in a central office and the names of the students are grouped according to high schools. A report on each student is sent to his high school principal and to his last English teacher, and summary reports are sent to county and city superintendents of schools. Of course these reports are based only on the fifteen or twenty per cent of high school graduates who enter college, but the sample is large enough—especially when several years are considered together—to indicate the effectiveness of the teaching. An honor list of schools is published each April in **The Tennessee Teacher** and republished widely in daily and weekly papers of the state.

The yearly reports and honor list are intended to encourage successful teachers and to point out to the less successful the need for improvement. As one means of improvement, the teaching programs of the most effective teachers (determined by the tests) have been made available. These programs, drawn directly from the classrooms, have been printed in a **Manual** of some three hundred pages, which is being distributed by the State Department of Education to every English teacher within the state. It is hoped that many teachers, once they are shown by the yearly reports the need for strengthening their work, will derive much help from the successful programs outlined in the **Manual**. But the **Manual** is intended both for those who are already teaching and for those who are preparing to teach. We cannot be reminded too often that the success of any English program depends, in the final analysis, on the adequate training of teachers.

John C. Hodges,
University of Tennessee.

* For more details see "The State-Wide English Program in Tennessee," **The English Journal**, February, 1945, pp. 71-76, reprinted in **College English**, May, 1945, pp. 448-452. See also the annual statement and honor list published in each April issue of **The Tennessee Teacher**, beginning with 1943.

THE SURVEY

(Continued from page 1)

losophy, and the loves of Dante that he never gets to the **Purgatorio**. But in neither case is it likely. I have never found such emphasis to obtain, but perhaps I have been fortunate. At any rate, the teachers referred to above were unwise.

Two things are to be noted: (1) the same kind of failure in teaching may apply to each course; (2) the studies of political and economic history, biography, literary history, etc., are attendant upon both. For you cannot teach Greek plays without some discussion of the development of the drama and the Greek theater; you cannot teach the Bible without some discussion of history and even of prosody (you don't want your students to say the Psalms are written in blank verse); you cannot teach Vergil without some discussion of Homer and Roman legend and history. Each book is written by a particular man at a particular moment in history, a man who has drawn in ideas from the circumambient intellectual atmosphere just as naturally as he has drawn his breath. To understand his book, we must know these ideas as fully as we can. Consequently, it seems to me that the objection that lies at the bottom of the substitution of a great books course for a survey course is not valid. In each course it is possible to make the lesser matter seem the more important. In each it is hard to strike the right balance; it can be done in both.

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There are other objections to the survey course. Much time will be spent on minor writers, minor at least when compared to Homer, Plato, Dante, etc. And the student who has only a limited time to spend on literature had better spend it on the best. This point, of course, cannot be denied. But it embodies, it is well to notice, something very like a counsel of despair. It admits, tacitly, that most students will not look at the texts outside of or after a course because of other demands on their time, and it bows to those demands. Also it must confess that little can be done by one course to indoctrinate the student with humane attitudes. No doubt, every teacher hopes that he may inspire some of his students to continue their reading, and no doubt some students do continue a more or less active interest in literature. But, we cannot trust the majority to do so; hence the emphasis on the best in the shortest time.

Several other considerations occur. Granted that we wish to cut down explanatory apparatus to a minimum and get to the text itself as soon as we are prepared, can we do this more effectively in a great books course or a survey? The answer is doubtful. In dealing with a book in translation, we are not dealing with one author or one period but with two, i.e., with two books. When we read Homer we are concerned not only with Homer but with Chapman or Pope or Lang, Leaf, Butcher, and Myers. What teacher will take one of these translations (or any other, for that matter) to his class and say, "This is Homer"? To avoid problems of language and literary ideals that are divergent not only from Homer's but from ours, only modern translations can be used. Are they available? I know of no available translations for the Greek plays that are even passable. It is true that much comes over in a translation, but in a translation of poetry, except in very rare cases, the power has disappeared. Find an admirer of **Beowulf**, of Homer, of Vergil, of Aeschylus to say this is not so. Who has looked into a French or German translation of Shakespeare and not been amused? The translation of the Bible is unique, and quite naturally finds itself a place in the survey course as well as in the great books course. Also, in reverence to the authors of the great books, we ought not to do their work the damage that we should do it if we ignored form and craftsmanship, as the designers of great books courses advise.

I am in some danger of being misunderstood here. I believe that an acquaintance with these great books is desirable in translation if the original cannot be read. I will go further: there is no substitute for such acquaintance. My point is that an intelligent reading of a translation requires scholarly apparatus and literary tact and hence more time and experience than the reading of a comparable book in English.

No objections can be brought against the survey course that do not also apply to the great books course. And, in addition, there is the great difficulty of dealing with a translation. How, then, can we make the most massive impression upon a student in the shortest time with the least possible time spent upon the non-essentials of the "attendant" studies? I believe that, with a little revamping, the old survey course can answer best. In the first place, the effect is cumulative, the subject continuous. The great danger of a great books course lies exactly in its "fragmentariness," in the tendency, so easy to follow, of dealing with each book as a unit with little carry-over to the next unit. The teacher goes from Plato to Greek plays to Shakespeare in one semester, let us say. What is Plato to Shakespeare? The differences between Greek and Elizabethan plays point some nice lessons in technique, but most designers of the course eschew technique as ancillary, if I understand them rightly. The survey course, however, leads gradually from one literary ideal to another, one type of subject matter to another so that, without too much forcing, the student's mind is invited to travel back and forth along the line. He is also invited to the great non-English books in the only way in which they can be made vital, by seeing how they have constantly formed the diet of the best English and American minds. The survey course should include fewer figures than it has in the past, perhaps, but enough of the minor writers should be included to show that the great writers did not stand alone. Such a course can, I believe, best serve the interest of the humanities. To it, we might add for each student a great books course. That might be a good way to take the offensive. Those interested in the humanities and in the welfare of our society should not be satisfied with a bare modicum of the student's time; they should press for more.

Franklin D. Cooley,
University of Maryland.

It is reported that Simeon Strunsky has translated Mr. Churchill's famous phrase into Basic English, as follows, "Blood and eye-water and face-water."

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